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State of the Lunatic Poor in Ireland. By W. COOKE TAYLOR, Esq.,
LL.D.

[*Read before the Statistical Section of the British Association at Cork, 19th Aug., 1843.*]

IN this paper, the materials of which were supplied to me by the Earl of Devon, it is my purpose to present to the consideration of the section the statistical results of the several Parliamentary inquiries which have been instituted on the subject of the lunatic poor of Ireland, and a statistical review of the statutes relating to them which have been passed since the Union.

The provision made for this distressed class by the Parliament of Ireland was wholly inadequate to the relief of the insane: a few cells in houses of industry and in county gaols were the only places provided for the reception of pauper lunatics. In 1804 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed, which reported the following resolution:—

“Resolved—That so far as at present appears to this Committee, the provisions of the Act of the 27th of his present Majesty, c. 27 (which enabled Grand Juries to raise funds by presentment for the support of the insane poor), have not been complied with.

“Resolved—That it appears to this Committee that in the house of industry in Dublin, provision is made for the support of upwards of 118 idiots and lunatics; in the house of industry of Cork, for 90; in that of Waterford, for 25; and in that of Limerick, for 20 paupers so afflicted.

“Resolved—That it appears to this Committee that the demand for admission of lunatics and idiots into all these places greatly exceeds the accommodation or funds provided for their support.”

In consequence of this report, a bill was introduced in the session of 1805 to establish four provincial asylums in Ireland, appropriated exclusively to lunatics and idiots. It was thus proposed to provide for the reception and treatment of 1,000. The preamble stated that, “under the existing law, the poor and the lunatics were confined in the same houses, a practice from which the most distressing inconveniences resulted, the method of confinement being only fitted for malefactors, and not for lunatics.” This bill was lost; and until the year 1810 no alteration was made in the law, except that the power of the Grand Juries to levy money was increased. In 1810 a grant was made by Parliament for establishing the Richmond Asylum in Dublin, intended for the accommodation of 200 lunatic patients. This hospital was opened in the year 1815.

On the 4th of March, 1817, a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to consider the expediency of making further provision for the lunatic poor of Ireland. It was then stated that, with the exception of one institution in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Tipperary, there was not a provision made for more than 100 lunatics throughout Ireland. In consequence of the recommendations of this Committee, district lunatic asylums were formed, and placed under the superintendence of a body of commissioners named by the Government, but acting gratuitously.

The following table will exhibit the districts for which these hospitals have been established, the population of these districts, the number of patients admitted from the contributory counties, the cures, and the expense of maintenance.

Asylum District and Population.	Counties in each District and Population.		Number of Patients from each County.	Total Admission from opening of Asylum.	Total Discharged cured.	Total Annual Expense.	Total Annual Expense per Head.	Distributive Annual Expense per Head.			Average Number of Patients at one time.
	Counties, &c.	Population, 1841.						In Clothing.	In Salaries.	In Food.	
Limerick 910,303	Limerick County	281,638	101	1,594	867	£. 4,921	s. 1 11	d. 13 19 7	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.
	Limerick City	48,391	29						0 12 7	2 11 5	7 8 3
	Clare	286,394	115								
	Kerry	293,880	102								
Londonderry 831,578	Londonderry	222,174	7	1,230	576	3,126	3 9	14 16 3	1 1 11	2 13 9	6 4 10
	Donegal	296,418	4								
	Tyrone	312,956	0								
	King's County	146,857	47								
Maryborough 557,578	Queen's County	153,830	51	523	237	2,719	4 4	16 5 8	0 15 10	3 16 5	7 3 5
	Westmeath	141,300	56								
	Longford	115,491	23								
	Dublin City	232,726	159								
Richmond 810,984	Dublin County	140,047	47	1,215	607	4,867	2 4	16 15 7	1 1 6	3 18 10	7 11 3
	Meath	183,828	29								
	Wicklow	126,143	55								
	Louth	111,979	23								
	Drogheda	16,261	5								
	Waterford County	172,971	77						395	155	2,172
Waterford 196,187	Waterford City	23,216	38								
Cork 854,118	Cork County	773,398	297	3,139	1,707	5,014	11 6	11 17 1	1 3 3	5 17 11	5 17 2
	Cork City	80,720	133								

It has unfortunately been found that these institutions are not adequate to meet the necessities of the case. Though originally intended for only 1,220 patients, they now contain 2,028; but the increased and rapidly increasing number of incurable cases have lamentably diminished their efficacy as hospitals for the cure of insanity; and unless some permanent and adequate remedy be supplied without delay, the cure of the disease, which must be considered the primary and most important object of these institutions, will be greatly diminished. On this subject the following observations have been made by the Poor Law Commissioners in a Report to Lord Eliot, dated September 29th, 1842:—"The district asylums are generally large and valuable institutions, supported at a great expense, for the reception and medical treatment of lunatics, very many of whom are therein cured, and thus restored to society; but they are not all cured, or susceptible of cure; and, notwithstanding the use of every means which skill and science can devise, they may remain hopelessly and curelessly insane. It is obvious that cases of this latter description must accumulate in every lunatic asylum; and, in fact, all the asylums are crowded, and their capacity for the cure of insanity in its various forms is crippled by this accumulation of chronic cases. Hence the too frequent commitment of lunatics to gaol as a place of security, and hence too the desire now manifested of relieving the asylums by transferring such cases to the workhouse."

All the lunatic asylums of Ireland have been built on plans approved by the Government, providing for the proper classification of the insane. Competent medical officers have been selected. A very considerable extent of land is added to each, thus providing healthy out-of-door occupations for the patients in agriculture and gardening. The domestic duties of the asylums, as well as some mechanical employments, are performed to a considerable extent by the patients. A humane and gentle system of treatment has been generally adopted, the cases requiring coercion and restraint not exceeding two per cent. on the whole.

It must not, however, be imagined that the district lunatic asylums are the only establishments in which pauper lunatics are confined in Ireland. Besides Swift's Hospital, which is supported by the bequest of the eminent dean of St. Patrick's, there are other public establishments provided for the custody, if not for the cure, of insanity, and supported by local taxation. Connected with some of the old houses of industry in Ireland, cells or rooms were provided for the insane.

These still subsist at Kilkenny, Lifford, Limerick, Island Bridge, and house of industry in Dublin. With the exception of the two last, these places of confinement are under the general authority of the Grand Juries, the funds for their support being raised by presentment or county-rate. In these establishments no adequate provision is made, or is likely to be made, for the medical or moral treatment of the unfortunate patients; no classification, no employment, no sufficient grounds for air or exercise. Hence the necessity of a severe and coercive system of treatment, and a chance of recovery, if not altogether extinguished, yet at least reduced to its very lowest rate.

By the Act 1 and 2 of Queen Victoria, two justices of the peace, acting with the advice of any qualified physician, surgeon, or apothecary, are authorized to commit to close custody in gaol any person apprehended under circumstances denoting derangement of mind and a pur-

pose of committing crime. By a subsequent clause the Lord Lieutenant is authorized to transfer such persons, as well as convicts for crime, to a lunatic asylum. Previous to this enactment, it does not appear that any Parliamentary or Governmental inquiry took place to ascertain whether the gaols of Ireland afforded any accommodation whatsoever for the insane; nor yet whether such a class of lunatics could be received in the district asylums if transferred thence from the several gaols. Nor does the statute contain any provision rendering its operation dependent on depositions taken on oath and recorded; nor yet does it define the qualification of the single medical witness on whose evidence these committals are permitted to take place. All these safeguards have been overlooked in a case where the liberty of the subject is so deeply and dangerously involved.

It would seem that this statute has operated more widely than could have been anticipated by its framers. From the Sixteenth Report of the Inspectors-General of Prisons it appears that so recently as the year 1837 there were but 37 insane patients confined in the gaols of Ireland, according to the following table.

TABLE II.—*Number of Idiots and Insane in the Gaols of Ireland in the Year 1837.*

Gaols.	Idiots.	Epileptic.	Mania.		Total.
			Curable.	Incurable.	
Cavan	..	1	..	1	2
Galway	..	..	2	..	2
Kerry	1	..	4	..	5
Kildare	..	..	3	..	3
Leitrim	..	..	2	..	2
Monaghan	1	..	1	..	2
Sligo	3	1	11	4	19
Westmeath	1	1	..	..	2
Total . .	6	3	23	5	37

In 1840 the number of lunatics confined in the gaols of Ireland had augmented, under the provisions of the Act 1 and 2 Victoria, c. 27, to the following extent :—

From Parliamentary returns, it appears that the number of lunatics imprisoned in gaols and bridewells has doubled in the course of the last two years, and now amounts to 214, of whom 40 only have been charged with or convicted of any criminal offences. It is therefore not surprising to find the Inspectors-General of Prisons declaring, in their Report for this year, “We beg again to revert to the practice of committing lunatics and idiots to gaol. It injures our prison discipline much; and no provision being made for the care, inspection, or cure of such patients in gaols by qualified persons, the result is, that any recent case of insanity thus committed becomes incurably diseased from want of proper treatment.” Nor is this all: objectionable as the Act is, it has been rendered still more so by the practices it has produced. Cases are stated where unfortunate lunatics are encouraged to commit trivial acts of mischief and violence, in order to afford a colourable pretext for their

commitment to prison, thus saving their family or friends the expense of providing for their safety.

TABLE III.—*Number of Idiots and Insane in the Gaols of Ireland, January 1, 1841.*

Gaols.	Idiots.	Epileptic.	Mania.		Total.
			Curable.	Incurable.	
Antrim	..	..	3	..	3
Armagh. . . .	2	1	2	1	6
Carlow	1	..	2	..	3
Cavan	..	..	5	..	5
Cork	..	1	2	..	3
Down	..	1	2	..	3
Dublin	1	..	2	1	4
Fermanagh. . .	1	..	2	2	5
Galway County. .	..	..	5	..	5
Galway Town . .	..	..	1	..	1
Kilkenny Town .	2	2	3	7	14
Kerry	..	..	1	..	1
Kildare	..	1	2	1	4
King's County . .	..	..	1	..	1
Leitrim	..	..	4	..	4
Longford	1	..	2	..	3
Mayo	..	..	1	..	1
Meath	2	1	1	5	9
Monaghan	..	..	3	1	4
Roscommon. . .	..	..	2	..	2
Sligo	..	..	5	..	5
Tyrone	5	3	3	4	15
Westmeath . . .	..	1	..	..	1
Wicklow	2	1	5	..	8
Total	17	12	59	22	110

I have next to call the attention of the section to a most important branch of inquiry,—the connection between the treatment of insane paupers in Ireland and the new Poor Law Act. By that Act the relief of destitution is stated as being the object of the Legislature, no special provision being made for sickness, insanity, or other calamity, except so far as such afflictions have come under the general definition, and the insane are then to be relieved only under the special provisions of the Act. The Poor Law Commissioners, however, have in their wisdom provided accommodation for 2,347 lunatics, in numbers varying from 60 in the larger workhouses to 4 in the smaller. Beds are placed for their reception in cells and dormitories. At the present moment the number of lunatics confined in 69 workhouses is 471, suffering under various types of the malady, both curable and incurable, violent maniacs, idiots, and epileptic patients. The Inspectors-General of Prisons, as well as other persons, seem to have considered that the workhouses, when completed, will furnish that additional relief which all admit to be indispensably necessary for the care and custody of the insane poor; but I doubt very much whether this is consistent with law, and I have no doubt whatever that it would greatly aggravate the evils which at present exist. The arrangements made for the insane in the

workhouses neither admit of due classification, employment, nor amusement; the attendance of paupers acting as keepers is most inefficient; the harmless lunatics, intermixed with the paupers, become objects of derision and attack on the part of the young and idle, producing dangerous irritation and excitement. It is obvious that the workhouses are wholly unfitted for the permanent reception of the insane, unless there were added in each of the 130 unions a lunatic asylum, with all its characteristics of moral and medical superintendence—a proposition wholly inadmissible on grounds of economy, as well as from other objections already stated. The expenses in salaries alone, Dr. Phelan estimates at no less a sum than 28,000*l.* per annum, exceeding the actual cost of maintaining nearly 2,000 lunatics in the seven most considerable asylums in Ireland.

State of Public Medical Relief in Ireland. By Dr. BULLEN, Jun.

[Read before the Statistical Section of the British Association at Cork, August, 1843.]

THE institutions in Ireland receiving grants of public money for the relief of the sick, are distributed into three classes—dispensaries, fever-hospitals, infirmaries.

Dispensaries.

	No.	Subscriptions.			Grand Jury Presentments.			Total.		
		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
	620	34,727	14	1½	34,332	15	11½	69,060	10	1

Free Hospitals.

No.	Subscriptions.			Grand Jury Presentments.			Total.			No. of Intern. Patients admitted.	Proportion of Intern to Population.
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.		
91	7,168	9	8½	22,072	15	2	29,241	4	10½	36,984	1 to 209½

Infirmaries.

No.	Subscriptions.			Grand Jury Presentments.			Parliamentary Grant.			Miscellaneous.			Total.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
40	2,877	6	4	25,362	4	7	3,172	8	2	8,655	11	9	40,067	10	10

		No. of Intern Patients.	Proportion of Intern Patients to Population.
		18,337	423½ to 1